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The est Training in the Prisons: A Basis for the Transformation of Corrections?

by Mark Woodard

(The FORUM acknowledges the controversial nature of the Erhard Seminar Training and neither endorses nor condemns the program. At various points throughout the following study, however, the editors have provided some contrapuntal observations in an effort to convey a balanced, objective perspective.)

The est Training

The Erhard Seminar Training — est — began in 1971. Since then, est has graduated well over 160,000 people including: John Denver, Peter Max, Valerie Harper, Cloris Leachman, Yoko Ono, Roy Scheider, Jerry Rubin, Diana Ross, and over 500 inmates of federal and state prisons. The est training is presently conducted in 25 American cities, as well as London, England, Bombay and New Delhi, India.

Werner Erhard, the founder of est, claims to have had an "enlightenment experience" in March 1971. Erhard's friends reported significant "changes" in him and wanted to "get" whatever "it" was that had transformed him. As a result of people's experience of a transformed individual and the willingness of the transformed individual to share his experience, est training was created. Erhard explained his enlightenment by first observing that he was not only his emotions, thoughts, ideas, intellect, beliefs, achievements, or failures. Rather, he said:

I was simply the space, the creator, the source of all that stuff. I experienced Self as Self in a direct and unmediated way. I didn't just experience self: I became Self. Suddenly I held all the information, the content, in my life in a new way, from a new mode, a new context. I knew it from my experience and not from having learned it. It was an unmistakable recognition that I was, am, and always will be the source of my experience.¹

(Quite. Ed.)

The est training thus aspires to instill in trainees a belief in an essentially self-determinative approach to life.

The training ordinarily is conducted on two consecutive weekends (Saturday and Sunday) taking approximately 60 hours, in a hotel ballroom. The chairs are arranged theatre style. At the front of the room is a raised platform. On the platform are two blackboards, a director's chair and a music stand. There are usually between 250 and 500 participants.

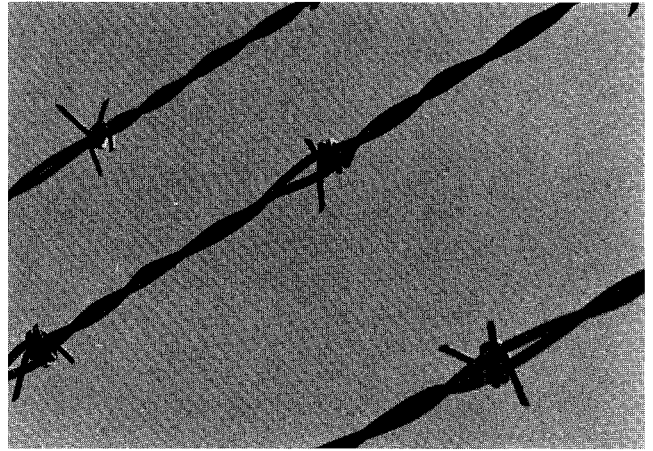


Photo by J.J.R.

The est training operates through ground rules that become the agreements of the trainees if they choose to remain in the training. Most of the important rules include the following: talking during the seminar must be through a microphone and addressed to the group; be on time; there is to be no eating, drinking, chewing, or smoking during the seminar (unless one has a medically verified condition requiring him to eat more often); no one is to leave the room for any reason except during designated breaks (about every 4 hours, unless they have a medically verified condition requiring use of the bathroom more than allowed); acknowledge through applause any of the trainees that share during the seminar; and refrain from using drugs or alcohol from the first day of the first weekend until the Sunday of the second.

Erhard once analogized the training to a ten-mile hike and explained that the reason for these ground rule is . . . "to create a situation in which people can learn something from their own way of being." Erhard continued by saying, ". . . you've got a stable thing against which to match yourself, and it's a thing that is tough enough so that you can't bullshit it."² Similarly, est brochures explain that: "The purpose of the est training is to *transform* your ability to *experience* living so that situations you have been trying to change, or have been putting up with clear up in the process of life itself." The key words are *transform your experience of living*, in that, transformation is central to the est experience.

¹W. W. Bartley III, *Werner Erhard-The Transformation of a Man-The Founding of est* as quoted in the *Graduate Review*, Nov. 29, 1978 p. 14.

²Dan Greenberg, *You are What You est*, *Playboy*, Dec., 1976.

There are three elements in the training: “data,” “processes,” and “sharing.” Data (*a label perhaps overstating what might better be termed “premises,” Ed.*) is presented

relationships and reality. Processes occur while the trainees sit with their eyes closed and follow the trainers instructions: e.g., “recall a time when you felt loved” or “locate a space in your right shoulder and notice what sensations you are experiencing.” Sharing is an opportunity (not required) for trainees to share with the group any opinions, revelations, observations, or disagreements they have as a result of either the data or a process.

There are numerous notions that are advanced by the trainer throughout the training. Some of these notions are: that all people are “perfect/complete” the way they are; that all people cause their own experience; that the purpose of the mind is survival and that although we have a mind, we are not our minds; nor are we our points of view or our emotions or upsets or successes or failures, but rather the being, the space; that each of us is three persons: first our “act,” i.e., our personality or presentation to the world, second the person that we are afraid we are and third the person that we really are; the Self that is fully capable of love, health, self-expression, happiness and responsibility.

Before discussing the history and results of est in the prisons it will be useful to look at the results of the training in the general population. “The Behaviordyne study indicated that in general the majority of those graduates surveyed manifested “definite improvement in self-image;” were ‘less anxious and dependent’ and exhibited ‘fewer guilts and fears.’” This study involved 93 persons, did not use a control group and was not a random sample. However, the est outcome study by Robert Ornstein and associates sent out a questionnaire with 680 questions to a random sample of 2,000 graduates. They were asked to evaluate their general experience of the training on a scale of 1 (very unfavorable) to 7 (very favorable). Over 50% gave it the highest possible score (7), the overall mean was about 6, and almost 90% of them indicated a favorable experience (5, 6, 7). (Babble and Stone — *What Have You Got After You Got It* — presented to American Psychiatric Association).³

More specifically this study indicated strong and positive health changes particularly in the areas of psychological health and those illnesses with a large psychosomatic component such as, allergies, digestive problems, back pains, smoking, and sexual difficulties. Also, many graduates reported improvements with such maladies as

headaches, hypertension, sleep difficulties; the need for medication, drugs, and alcohol; in their energy level, work satisfaction and significant relationships. “Only 7% reported overall negative changes in physical or mental health and the study uncovered no evidence that est had harmed anyone.”⁴ Ornstein noted that his study does not demonstrate that people’s health changes as a result of est, but that they say it does. He further says, that although the sampling was large enough to be representative of the est graduates at the time (1973) it wasn’t designed to isolate the training as the variable that has modified the graduates’ health, nor does it eliminate the “placebo effect” — people reporting positively about any thing they are questioned about.⁵ However, a follow-up study by Babbie and Hill indicate that the positive results of the training seem to last or even grow over time.⁶

Luke Rhinehart performed an informal sampling of about a hundred est graduates, all of whom felt they had gained positive value from the training. Based upon interviews with scores of graduates over a two-year period he concluded that they usually report one or more of the following five beneficial results of est training.

First, the vast majority of graduates report in a general way that their lives are better. They have more energy and enjoy things more. . . Second some graduates report that persistent, recurring physical symptoms (such as stuttering, arthritis, and their sinus problems, back pains, and other specific bodily pains, headaches, allergies) disappear. They attribute the disappearances either to the direct result of some specific est process or to the general influence of est. . . the third beneficial result graduates report is an increased sense of responsibility. Taking responsibility for one’s life necessitates the abandoning of a large number of destructive psychological games that were tied to the assumption that other people control our lives and are to blame for our failures. . . Fourth, many graduates report that they are less often run by the ‘yama-yama’ of their minds — they are more in touch with their own actual sensations, feelings, emotions, and other elements of their experience and better able to express them to others. Learning to be in touch with and to accept their actual experience — ‘what is’ — allows them to express honestly what they feel. *What is* becomes more important than *what was* or *what ought to be*. . .⁷

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 236

⁶Ibid., pp. 237-240

⁷Ibid., p. 245

³Luke Rhinehart, *The Book of est*, Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston pp. 236-237.

The fifth beneficial result is discussed throughout chapter six of the *Book of Est* and is what many graduates term "getting it" or an "enlightenment experience" and often occurs during the anatomy of the mind process on the last day of the training. Clearly, not all graduates have the same experience during this process. Yet, according to Erhard all trainees eventually "get it." Assertedly, at some time (usually on the fourth day) they all break free from their identification with their minds and bodies and glimpse at who they really are, which is actually who they have been all along. According to Erhard:

The person de-identifies with his mind, de-identifies with his emotions, he de-identifies with his problems, he de-identifies his maya, he begins to see that he is not the play.⁸

With this de-identification the person discovers the essence of the drama which is simply himself. Again quoting Erhard:

Self is all there is. I mean, that's it. We are trying to accomplish what is already so, that's why it is so easy. What is already so is. . .you are.⁹

Hence, it is this dissociation that is the trainees enlightenment experience.

(Erhard's vaporous, somewhat obtuse statement of objectives is rightfully subject to suspicion. It is improbable that any trainee's experience, however trivial, could not be accommodated by such imprecision. The impression of success is thus virtually guaranteed. Ed.)

Based upon the Rhinehart survey, 80-90% of all graduates appear to have obtained significant benefits from the est training. However, most of those that took the training were already succeeding to a large extent in life. How would this training that includes elements of Zen, TA, TM, Gestalt, Scientology, mind dynamics, and the humanistic psychology of Maltz, Maslow, and Rogers be received by murderers, rapists, bank robbers, embezzlers and other various criminals in a prison setting? Could it transform the prisoners into productive law abiding citizens? Could it succeed where countless other rehabilitative measures have failed?

III. THE est TRAINING IN THE PRISONS

A. History

Thus far, est has donated its standard training to over 500 inmates of federal prisons at Lompoc, Leavenworth, and Alderson; as well as the California State Prison at San Quentin. It started at Lompoc in 1974, through the

efforts of Thomas Keohane, Jr., a member of the prison's staff at the time. Keohane learned of est from Gene Stevens, the Mayor of Lompoc, who recommended that the staff consider adding it to its programs. According to Keohane, "We had 16 self-improvement groups. The institution was very active in a variety of programs."¹⁰ So Keohane and Warden Frank Kenton agreed to experiment with the est training and in July, 1974, 54 inmates and 4 staff members graduated from the program. The prison staff responded enthusiastically to the experience of the training process but even more significantly reported that "even the more radical inmates who took the training spoke highly of it. More importantly perhaps, inmates who had records of problems in prison began 'getting along'."¹¹

As a result of this favorable experience the officials scheduled another training in February, 1975 from which a total of 60 inmates and staff members graduated with essentially the same favorable results.

Subsequently, Keohane took the est training and thereafter became Associate Warden for Programs at *Leavenworth Federal Prison*. (*No causative implication is intended. Ed.*) He then arranged for est to conduct a training starting on October 13, 1976 with 140 inmates and 12 staff. This training graduated 121 prisoners and staff.¹²

The est training came to San Quentin State Prison in California as a result of a meeting between George Jackson, Chief Deputy Director of Department of Corrections and Werner Erhard. The training at San Quentin occurred in June of 1976 with 59 staff members and inmates graduating.¹³

The est training was also recently completed at Alderson Federal prison in West Virginia in July of 1978.

B. The Prison Environment

It is obvious that criminals occupy the prisons where est conducts its standard training. What is less obvious to the outsider is the nature of the prison environment.

A prison guard, Michael Keller who is also a psychologist and an est graduate noted that at San Quentin the inmates are products of an "us v. them" perspective. Keller explains that the first thing he was told upon taking his job was "never trust a convict." He soon discovered that, "In a prison setting, you should never trust a convict, and they are totally trustworthy. It's just that they keep trust by a set of agreements different from the staff."¹⁴ That is, if a staff member finds a convict trustworthy the inmates do not.¹⁵

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.22

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 22

¹²Michael Keller, *Whose Rules Are We Playing By*, The Graduate Review, Sept., 1977. p. 10.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 245

⁹Earl Babbie, Ph.D., *est in Prison-General Overview*, American Journal of Correction, Nov.-Dec., 1977. p. 22.

"The first barrier to getting what's going on in prison is that you want to perceive through your set of agreements, and that never works. Eventually, it dawns on you that they aren't playing the game by the same rules as you do. In fact, they aren't even playing the same game. . . ."¹⁶

The agreements of the inmate subculture are most strongly held by the prisons gang members. Membership in these gangs is determined by past criminal record and race, it is by invitation only and is for life. The only way to leave the gang is to die. To be given an assignment and to refuse to carry it out, is punishable by death."¹⁷

Moreover, Keller observes that when a person breaks a rule in society he ends up in prison. When he breaks a rule in prison he ends up in solitary confinement—"the hole", or in a gang. However, in contrast to society, "being bad" breaking the staff's rules gives the prisoner a preferred status. The prisoner can and often does see it, as a way of being the best of the worst which gains him protection by association.¹⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that the gangs compose only 10 percent of the population, most of the rest tend to follow their lead. Furthermore, if and when the gang leaders call for a race war, "the rest of the prison population becomes at the effect of it, chooses sides, segregates itself, and the war takes place." Thus, at such times the gangs are the leading force and the staff is the reacting force. Keller concludes that although the prisoners resist the staff, they nevertheless acknowledge that without them, the gangs would destroy themselves. Hence, the staff survives by unspoken agreement and curiously is an integral part of the gangs survival.¹⁹ It is thus an environment of conflicting beliefs and agreements generated by an inmate subculture to which est brings its standard training.

C. Results

The first study of observable results yielded by est in the prisons was conducted by Dr. Earl Babbie. In it, he interviewed nine inmate graduates from Lompoc and San Quentin, eight staff members that were graduates and both inmates and staff that had not taken est.

The nine inmate graduates all reported positive value from the experience with responses ranging from quiet enthusiasm to ecstatic excitement. More specifically, they said they gained: "greater enthusiasm about life, greater self-confidence and self-esteem, ability to be more open in relationship with others, a greater sense of responsibility about past, present and future life; and better interaction with fellow inmates and prison guards." He noted that the non-graduates interviewed said essen-

tially the same thing about the graduates they knew. One prisoner serving a life-sentence without possibility of parole explained what he got from the training, "Once you understand yourself and like yourself and begin to love yourself, then, you've got more room for everybody else."²⁰

Babbie further reported that many inmates stressed their realization that they were personally responsible for putting themselves in prison. He observed that this realization was stated without regret, or remorse but, simply as a discovery. An inmate who had been in prison several times said, "I ain't got no kicks coming. I was a chump before. Every time I come to the penitentiary, I come for something different, but you set yourself up."²¹

The study indicated that as a consequence of acknowledging responsibility for putting themselves in prison, the inmates could move towards acceptance of being in prison, one inmate said; "It makes it easier to accept being here. Because you are here. And the est training...allows you to accept what is." Asked if that meant that he no longer cared about getting out, he responded, "Oh no! Oh no! Never happen! It means that you stop feeling bad about being in here, and you accomplish what you want to accomplish while you're in here. In other words, your mind and feelings aren't tied up thinking it's terrible to be in this place!"²²

Another noteworthy change in the inmate graduates was that instead of an us/them dichotomy towards the staff, several now regarded the staff member as just people with a job to do. Several staff members agreed that the inmates that were graduates had generally improved social relationships. They gave specific examples of inmates that had previously been in constant conflict with other inmates and staff prior to the training and now were not. Keohane summarized it this way:

It just seems that fewer of them get in trouble after they've gone through the training, even if they've been troublesome since the time they got here. They become more responsible.²³

It is significant that everyone interviewed saw est as a *supplement to, rather than a substitute for*, other prison programs. Many inmates now participated in a variety of programs that they had previously ignored. Others worked with juveniles in community programs.

The final finding of the survey was that both staff and inmates—graduates and non-graduates favored more trainings. The prison staff, especially the psychiatrists and psychologists, wanted future training to be accompanied by rigorous evaluation research efforts. Until such time they indicated an unwillingness to pass final

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 11

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Babbie, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Earl Babbie, *est in Prison-General Overview*, Second of Two Parts, *American Journal of Corrections*, Jun-Feb., 1978, p. 25.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*

judgment on the effectiveness of the est training pending long-term observation of inmate graduates. However, they all supported a continuation of trainings in the interim.²⁴

The other study by Michael Keller contrasted the est graduate inmates with the general prison population. He stated that while a few still get into trouble, it is minor in comparison with their past. Additionally, he noted, that the graduates do not participate in the usual prison conspiracies.²⁵ Furthermore, most now have transformed their relationships. Many have gone beyond transformed individual relationships and have started "to take responsibility for crime at the level of society" by establishing a program called the squires. This program is for juveniles that are headed for prison. They are invited to San Quentin to talk with inmates. The prisoners communicate their experience of prison and the lessons they have learned from it with the intention of supporting these young people in re-evaluating crime as a way to "make it".²⁶

Keller then commented on the long term effects of the training on the est graduates. He says,

It has been over a year now since the training, and without the benefit of graduate seminars, or even an occasional guest seminar, the men keep coming from their experience and telling it the way it is. When I find I'm at the effect of working at San Quentin, I seek out any of the est inmates. That allows me to transform my experience and get back to being at cause again. I'm deeply honored to know them and associate with them.²⁷

Keller and Dr. Paul Gilbert conducted a survey of 15 est non-graduate inmates. This study indicated that graduates in comparison to control group were significantly more open, tolerant, felt themselves more capable of understanding others, and held people in higher esteem. Moreover, they noted that 100 percent of the est graduates disagreed with the statement, "although some may learn, too many people get hurt in est."²⁸ Indeed, these results correlate with studies done on est graduates in the general population. Although, the results of these studies are impressive, they nevertheless, are only tentative and the entire subject requires more thorough and longterm research to demonstrate decisively if the est training is marginally beneficial, or the basis of a transformation in corrections. Fortunately, just such a research project is in its final stages. The federal govern-

ment has funded a study by Dr. Roy Hossferd of the University of California at Santa Barbara to ascertain the long-term results of the est training on prison inmates.

D. *Excerpts from a Prison Training*

The first conflict arose naturally enough, about the ground rules of the training. A prisoner insisted on talking without raising his hand. The trainer (Ted) reminded the inmate (Burt) that he had agreed to abide by the rules before joining the training. Upon Burt's repeated refusal, Ted invited him either to keep the agreements or leave the training. He left. Gary Clarke (author of the article) said, "At this point the trainees began to get that it made no difference to Ted if they took the training or not. (I was later told that about here some of the cons realized that this wasn't their usual. . .do gooders' program.)"²⁹

The next dispute occurred as the second day of training began. Stewart (the other trainer) asked the inmates to share their homework processes. One of the trainees, B.J., raised his hand but was not immediately called on. A couple of minutes later, Stewart asked B.J., if he had a question. B.J. at first, didn't answer, then said "never mind" and "forget it", but Stewart continued to ask if he had a question. Finally, after the 7th time B.J. acknowledged that he had a question. Then, Stewart asked him why he was angry and B.J. told him to go on with the training. Stewart responded, "This is the training, B.J. what are you pissed off about?" B.J. sat down. At this point, the following dialogue occurred:

Stewart: Stand up!

B.J.: Why didn't you just go on with the training?

Stewart: This is the training, B.J. What are you pissed off about? (B.J. sits down, again).

Stewart: Stand up!

B.J.: Back off, man! You're liable to get hurt!

Stewart: Stand up or get your ass out of training!

B.J.: I ain't pissed. So fuck off.

Stewart: You're full of shit, B.J. And you're a fuckin' liar.

B.J.: I'd like to have you say that to me outside, Jack!

Stewart: Exactly! You're standing there, ready to rip my head off and telling me you're not pissed off. You can't tell the truth so that makes you a liar, B.J., Get it.

B.J.: Look! Get off my case! Get back on that stage and do your fucking training!

Stewart: We're doing the training, B.J., Your training.

This is the part where B.J. gets he's a liar and full of shit.

²⁴Keller, op. cit. p. 10.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid. The studies clearly indicate that the est training has had a generally favorable response from both inmates and prison staff.

²⁷Gary Clarke, *The est Standard Training at San Quentin Prison: Nothin' This Good Ever Happened to Me Before*, an est brochure, p. 2.

²⁸Ibid., p. 3

²⁹Ibid., p. 6, 7.

Stewart: Are you pissed off?

B.J.: Bet your ass I'm pissed off.

Stewart: And are you pissed off because I didn't call on you when you had your hand up?

B.J.: Yeah, I'm pissed off cause you didn't call on me when. . .

Stewart: *That's the truth!* Congratulations!

B.J.: Thank you!³⁰

A situation occurred on Day 3 that lead to B.J. leaving the training, only to return and agree to keep the agreements. During the sharing (that is part of each day of the training) the prisoners said the following:

"Y' know? It doesn't matter what I believe. It's always gonna be just the way it is."

Another, "I keep seein' me in everyone."

Still, another: "Goin' round looking at everyone seein' how I neer been with anyone. You know how many year I fucked away."

He then said: "I spent a lot of time wanting what I didn't have and not likin' what I did have. That's stupid! If I start likin' what I got I'd be in great shape."

Perhaps, one of the most noteworthy comments was made at the graduation following the training. The inmate/graduate said,

Whenever I was in prison it was always a trap I'd escape. Except when I was out that was a trap, too. So I'd do something to get thrown back in prison. I never knew 'till now, it was me making it that way.³¹

It seems clear that the est training creates an environment that allows people (regardless of background) to learn about: themselves and their acts, to acknowledge responsibility for their life, and frequently it allows them to experience love, joy, and satisfying relationships with people. Everything in the est environment is done towards this end. It is precisely because the trainer is willing to challenge the trainee about keeping the agreements of the seminar, that people gain the opportunity to observe their acts or way of doing things. It is because the trainer comes from "ruthless compassion" into his exchanges with the seminarians that the training acts as a "mirror" or "gravity" for people to discover how they created their life the way it is. That is, the fact that many prisoners acknowledge that they were responsible for putting themselves in prison (their life up to then) also will allow them to acknowledge responsibility for their future in a new and powerful manner. Finally, the environment of the training is also grounded in love, support, and compassion. Hence, to the extent that these inmates gain awareness of, and acknowledge their own worth they likewise are in touch with their love for and relatedness to others. To the extent these prisoners experience some or all of the above, they have dramatically altered their potential for succeeding in life and have reduced the likelihood of committing future crimes.

E. est Viewpoint on its Role in Corrections

How does est, an educational corporation, view its work in the prisons? How does it view the training in relation to other ongoing programs? How does it view other programs? What does est propose for the future?

The answers to these questions come from the testimony of Ted Long (J.D.), an est trainer, to the Senate Subcommittee on Penitentiaries and Corrections. Long was speaking in favor of Senate Bill #3227, which proposed the establishment of therapeutic communities in selected Federal Correctional Institutions. It is worth noting that Long has trained over 30,000 people including inmates at Leavenworth, Lompoc and Alderson federal prisons and the California state prison at San Quentin.

Long has conducted an extensive study of existing correctional programs in prisons with the aid of wardens from San Quentin, Leavenworth, and Lompoc to supplement a major study assessing the effectiveness of correc-

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³⁰Ted Long, J.D. *Testimony to Senate Sub-Committee on Penitentiaries and Corrections*, July, 1978.

³¹Ibid.

tional institutions by Douglas Lipton for the Governor of New York. According to Long:

Our review of 286 major studies including individual and group counselling, job adjustment, college education, and aptitude training, revealed essentially no major results.³²

However, Long also states,

... as a result of having now interacted directly in the lives of over 500 prison inmates in the above named institutions, we feel it is possible to make a major breakthrough in terms of correction.

Seven studies of individual counselling for the discharged or paroled failed to reduce recidivism. A California study of felons (excluding narcotic addicts) that were receiving psycho-dynamic counselling, with substantial casework supervision and psychiatric consultation was also essentially negative. Moreover, thirteen other studies of individual psycho-therapy revealed. . . "no clearly positive or negative findings" regarding the recidivism rate. Those programs that produced any results focused on assisting the released prisoner with such practical problems as finances, getting along at home, and other related "street" problems. Thus, researchers have noted that the most positive results occur when programs relate to the street, i.e., handling practical problems. Long noted at this point: "There is a clear difference when the participants are amenable to the program rather than reluctant to participate.

They also reviewed eighteen studies of group psychology, group therapy, guided group interaction, and group counseling. The best results were with inmates over 21 that were known as "good risk" offenders as well as those that held community meetings in combination with group counselling. However, for the most part these studies contained few positive results. Particularly disappointing was the similar recidivism rate between those that participated in the programs and those that had not.

The next area studied was after-release vocational training. The Sheller report (1961) studied former inmates given group counselling in combination with a yearly supplement of casework in the areas of vocational and educational plans, and personal adjustments demonstrated partial success in reducing recidivism when compared with no treatment (Study of inmates from minimum security prison—no hardened criminals in study). In contrast, a study by Taylor (1969) directed at females, showed no significant difference between the reconviction rate of the experimental and control groups. The other studies mentioned displayed mixed results.

Studies on skill development indicate a lack of clarity on the benefits to the offender after completion of the training program and release from prison. The problem often results from the offender concluding that he now has the necessary skills to succeed in the job market, only to find that his training, often, is for unavailable positions, or is too superficial to qualify him for such a job. The result is that he is left more bitter than before entering the program. "Such cases demonstrate that pointless programs are far more detrimental than no programs at all."

Long concludes that:

These studies make it all too apparent that a major transformation is required in the very basis of the entire problem of our approach to correction, and that major changes must occur if we are to experience major success in Federal Correctional programs. From my experience in Federal Correctional Institutions, I know it is possible to make a difference of this kind.

Long's contention is that there must be a contextual shift in the manner in which all these programs proceed. A contextual shift is a change in the philosophical basis or "ground of being" from which these programs are delivered. He suggests that such a shift would occur in corrections if its approach was altered from punishment to one designed to rehabilitate the prisoner to a functioning, responsible and contributing member of society.

One of the most serious difficulties confronting those in corrections was noted by Michael Keller, that correctional institutions operate on two sets of agreements—that of the institution on the one hand and of the inmates on the other. That is, there seems to be an unspoken agreement among the inmates *not* to participate sincerely in the policies and programs of the prison since to do so would threaten their status and survival in the inside inmate community. Yet, the institutions believe that they cannot survive unless they operate by the norms and agreements that they were established to uphold. Thus, what is necessary is to shift the correctional institution's perspective from its own survival to effective service—to transform the conditions in which these programs are offered.

The issue then is not simply to devise new programs that will actually rehabilitate the participating inmates. The task is, according to Long, far more profound and fundamental: to generate a condition of workability within correctional institutions that have thus far resisted transformation and have in their 106 year history shown little rehabilitative success. The first stop therefore is to

³²Ibid.

acknowledge the present condition of unworkability out of which existing programs operate.

Next, it is necessary to note the false assumptions and beliefs that perpetuate this self-defeating condition. Long asserts that,

The prevailing rehabilitative and correctional programs assume that inmates are *not* all right, and that they ought to strive to *become* all right, and that failure to participate aggressively and enthusiastically in correctional programs offered to them is proof that they are not all right and therefore *should* participate in these programs to become all right.

He then says, that, these assumptions and beliefs that perpetuate this condition of unworkability, *can* be transformed. Long continues,

That is, a shift in the stance of non-participation universally shared by inmates throughout the world—to one of eager, genuine, and enthusiastic participation—is not only possible, it is the routine result of inmates who have experienced the est training—who have gone on to produce benefits for themselves, and their fellow inmates by their transformed participation in *other* prison programs.

He then noted that the contextual shift (discussed above) in the inmates willingness to participate in the prisons' rehabilitative and correctional programs has occurred. This results from the inmates' experience of their inherent ability to take responsibility for the quality of their lives, past, present, and future.

As a result of such a shift, the inmates bring this new experience of themselves not simply to this or that program but rather, to *all* programs in which they participate; since the issue is no longer *will the program work*, but rather, *am I willing to have my life work?* Thereafter, they see the various programs as opportunities to express innate humanity and inherent ability to participate in controlling their own lives. The central thrust of Long's testimony is an assertion that est has produced a transformation in the inmates that have taken the training, and that out of their transformed experience of themselves has come a willingness to take responsibility for their future life, which in turn allows the other prison programs to work. Est does not seek to substitute itself for other programs, rather it views its training as a vehicle that will allow the other programs to achieve their individual objectives.

Next, Long discusses the results of the training at Alderson Federal Prison in West Virginia. An official of the prison, Michael Reams, reported that from a nucleus of seventy est graduate inmates the quality of life at the prison was starting to transform. He specifically noted their increased willingness to participate in life and contribute to the other inmates.

Long demonstrated that the Alderson inmates' increased desire to participate and contribute is consistent with thousands of other est graduates. He noted that 4,000 est assistants contribute between twenty-five and thirty-five thousand hours of work per week, with the single contractual stipulation that they get more out of the experience than they put into it. It was calculated that this amounts to 1.5 million donated hours a year. Numerous useful projects may well be created by prison officials and est inmate graduates to channel this desire to contribute to others and participate in life.

Est's view of its own role in correction may be summarized by Long's answer to the penologist's question: What is to be Done?

"Our task is to shift the context of prison life from a premised condition of unworkability, based on assumptions of inmate deficiency and inability and not 'all-rightness', to a context of participation and contribution, premised on recognition of inherent inmate ability, sufficiency, and a full potential for individual responsibility."

After noting the necessity for the social scientists to create the same type of quantum leap in understanding that the physical scientists created in producing the modern technological world, Long said: "I suggest it is equally obvious that the correctional process does not work, and that to have an opportunity to have it work, we must be willing to enter beyond what is known."

Long then concludes his testimony by putting his advocacy of the creation of a transformation in corrections within the framework of transformation generally. He said that:

... beginning with the recognition that to be responsible, to participate fully in life, to experience responsibility and ownership of our successes and failures, and to communicate them are our common human nature. Let it be noted that these are the requisite qualities of a genuinely therapeutic community.

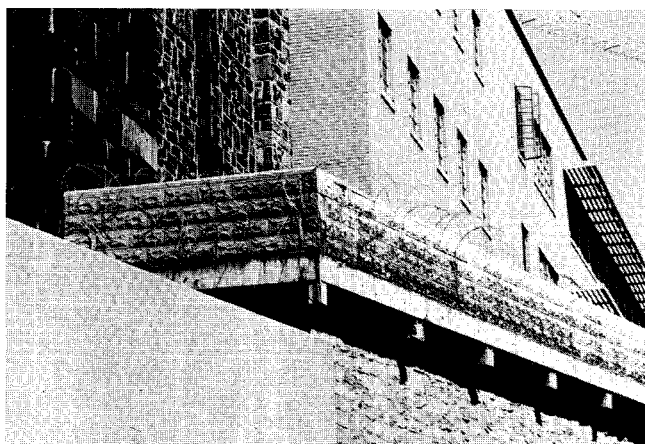


Photo by J.J.R.